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INCREASING FLUENCY IN STRUGGLING READERS
THROUGH NEWSPAPER READING

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education:
Reading/Language Arts

by
Kimberly Bonice Koch
June 2007

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Approved by:



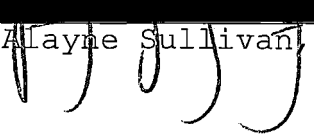
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5-22-07

Date



Dr. Alayne Sullivan, Second Reader



ABSTRACT

One third-grade teacher and six of her students participated in this 4-week study that examined the effect on fluency of newspaper reading and various constructive reading and engagement activities. The group of six students represented a heterogeneous mix of male and female students, with varying reading abilities. These six students were assigned to an Optimal Learning Model pull-out fluency instruction using the newspaper as text. Results from the Developmental Reading Assessment instrument reveal significantly improved effects in the number of miscues, correct words per minute, and prosody for the six students. The three key elements of reading fluency are accuracy in word decoding, automaticity in recognizing words, and appropriate use of prosody of meaningful oral expression while reading.

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Finally, I have to say with much gratitude 'thank you' to my wonderful and loving husband, Glen, for all his support and encouragement through this project. With all of his love and support it made this project bearable.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my wonderful husband,
Glen, and my two beautiful daughters, Jami and Amber. I
love you.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Many teachers are disturbed about the number of elementary students who struggle with reading. The *No Child Left behind Act* results in teachers frazzled and under pressure to ensure that all children become successful readers. Elementary school classroom teachers are increasingly expected to take the crucial and primary role of accelerating the reading growth of elementary school struggling readers (Allington & Walmsley, 1995), a shift from the previous reliance of a reading specialist and special education teachers to teach children with reading difficulties (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989). In fact, difficulty with reading is one of the primary reasons students are referred for special education services and challenges with reading fluency have long been considered a common characteristic of student with disabilities and special needs (p. 67).

Reading fluency is needed to be a successful reader. Our education system tends to overlook instruction on reading fluency, while stressing decoding and comprehension. Subsequently, many children are not fluent

readers, and a national concern has emerged (Pressley, Gaskins & Fingeret, 2006).

Researchers have come to conclude that struggling readers need more than effective short-term interventions; they also need effective reading instruction in their regular classroom programs which focuses on oral reading fluency.

Educational agencies have also suggested replacing the use of a single text source with multiple resources and a strong focus on newspapers, periodicals, trade books, and the internet (Shaw, 2000).

To develop reading fluency a variety of texts should be used frequently (Rasinski, 2003). Timely newspaper articles are highly motivational for students of all ages. Students enjoy the "adulthood" of the newspaper as well as the variety of reading and visual material included in the newspaper. By using the newspaper articles and photos in conjunction with specific strategies and rubrics, at least one a week, teachers help their students comply with state educational standards and prepare for both standardized tests and real life situations (Shaw, 2000). The purpose of the research was to investigate the advantages of using this readily available, low-cost, high-interest authentic

text to improve the reading fluency of third grade students struggling in reading.

Research has demonstrated that students who participate in literacy programs that incorporate the newspaper as authentic text outperform students who do not use the newspaper (Shaw, 2000). Shaw (2000) describes the newspaper as 'a loving textbook'. She explains this when she states, "It's the tool that helps integrate the latest work and local news, politics and technology into classrooms. It's the most current and up-to-date source of information. It will never be dated" (Shaw, 2000). Teachers can use the newspaper as center activities. Shaw (2000) also states that the newspaper can also be an excellent tool to help students' increase their oral reading fluency.

One can assume that specific reading comprehension strategies must be implemented in an effective primary reading curriculum as supported by this research. Most reading researchers agree that fluency bridges the gap between merely recognizing words and reading comprehension, but researchers' definitions of fluency differ greatly. Three primary components seem to be accepted in most variations of the definition: accuracy in decoding, automaticity in word recognition, and the

appropriate use of prosodic features including stress, pitch, and juncture (Rasinski, 2003). Consequently, the newspaper, rich in opportunities to decode unfamiliar words, recognize frequently used words, and practice prosody, was a logical choice of authentic text for this research.

Copland and Knapp (2006) explain the importance of a teacher's knowledge of content and how young learners connect with it shapes the nature of academic tasks when they write, "State standards, district frameworks, and textbook choices define what is to be taught in the classroom, but ultimately teachers' own grasp of the subject matter largely determines what will be taught and learned" (p. 12). Using the newspaper as a resource for expository text can be informative, engaging and additionally can aid in increasing oral fluency skills. Studies prove that teachers' knowledge of subject matter and how young students connect with it influences the nature of academic tasks.

Furthermore, Wiggins and McTighe (2005) add that they must also factor in the needs of our many and varied students when designing learning experiences. For instance, various student interests, developmental levels, oversize classrooms, and prior accomplishments must always

mold their thoughts about the learning activities, assignments, and assessments. For that reason, if an energetic reading teacher is encouraging struggling readers to use the newspaper to aid with their oral reading fluency progress would be made. Newspapers hold a wealth of information and interests to all.

Knowing what news is and where to find it is a necessity of modern day life, and one which can be introduced in school. For many students, the newspaper will be the only material read after high school; therefore, adequate instruction regarding the newspaper and its content and format should be given to ensure intelligent, life-long reading habits (Sullivan & Allen-Thompson, 1998). Furthermore, the newspaper is a vital resource to develop fluency.

Educators are quick to point out what they like to teach, what activities they will do, and what kinds of resources they will use; but without clarifying the desired outcomes of their instruction, how will they ever know whether their plans are suitable or arbitrary (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 14)? As no resource, skill, or concept should stand in isolation, this study utilized a variety of activities that provided for individualized instruction, for making learning student-centered, and for

putting skills of reflective thinking and critical thinking into practice. An important function of modern education is to teach students to use the many informational resources available, including the newspaper, as a current reference. As the students engage in reading the newspaper on a daily basis, their reading fluency will in effect increase.

Few studies have offered data that shows a correlation between systematic reading instruction using the newspaper, and student progress in decoding, vocabulary knowledge, reading fluency, or comprehension. That is, most studies focus on only one or more of these variables.

Studies indicate that when students get off to a poor start in reading they rarely catch up. Currently, one-third of children in the United States experience difficulty in learning to read (Allington, 1995). What makes this statistic especially alarming is the fact that children who have difficulty reading at grade level by the end of third grade rarely catch up with the good readers in their class, even when they receive extra help. At the national level in the United States, results from the 2000 National Assessment of educational Progress (Donahue, Finnegan, Lutkus, Allen, & Campbell, 2001) indicate the

only 63% of fourth-grade students achieved at or above the basic level of achievement. Specifically, according to Juel (1998), children who are below-average readers in first grade have a .88 probability of remaining poor readers by the end of fourth grade. Another devastating statistic is that of all children identified as learning disabled in schools, 80% are primarily impaired in reading; 90% of these children have problems with the development of decoding skills.

Struggling readers encounter negative consequences: grade retention, assignment to special education classrooms (if they can qualify), or participation in long-term remedial services. Further, as they progress through the grade levels, the academic distance from those who read well grows more pronounced (the Learning First Alliance, 1998). In contrast, more able readers are better decoders, read more, and thereby gain more information from texts: in general, they can look forward to achieving academic success in all subject areas. As it should be, much work on the method of reading comprehension has been grounded in studies of good readers. We know a great deal about what good readers do when they read. Good readers are active readers. They constantly evaluate whether the text, and their reading of it, is meeting their goals. As

they read, good readers frequently make predictions about what is to come. Good readers try to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words and concepts in the text, and they deal with inconsistencies or gaps as needed. Comprehension is a continuous, consuming, and complex activity but one that, for good readers, is both satisfying and productive (Pressley & Afflerback, 1995).

Why do some students struggle with reading and what can be done to increase their success? These questions plague teachers and parents and compel one to search for answers. Is there one program, curriculum or specific strategies that can actually improve reading levels?

This researcher sensed that the six students chosen for the study group needed more individual attention during reading instruction before they would be able to perform proficiently during guided reading groups. These students were easily distracted and reluctant to try to read when other students were listening. A couple of children appeared to sometimes feel humiliated at not being able to read the chosen selections, the other few children were quite simply more interested in talking and disturbing those around them than reading the given text.

It was the hope for this project that these students could obtain the skills needed to think critically about

text they read silently, and read with prosody. This researcher wanted these struggling readers to be able to read a text independently, comprehending it deeply enough to answer questions requiring judgment and analysis of text. Therefore, a shift in reading instruction with these six struggling readers emphasizing fluency using the newspaper was implemented. The same critical thinking techniques in discussion of real text was used, however the effectiveness of using a variety of activities utilizing the newspaper was examined. For the purpose of this study the researcher conducted a pre and post fluency assessment using the Multidimensional Fluency Scale (MFS) and the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). The Multidimensional Fluency Scale measures the number of words read per minute as well as expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace. The DRA measure reading accuracy which is the percentage of words read correctly, fluency rate (words read per minute (WPM)), and phrasing (expression, intonation, guided by punctuation and meaning).

This text examines numerous scholars in the area of fluency and struggling readers. This text will also examine a specific group of third grade struggling readers

and will address the effect on fluency of newspaper reading.

In the following chapters, a method of using the newspaper as text will be outlined and described as it relates to increasing fluency for struggling readers. The next chapter reviews major literature related to interventions that augmented fluency for struggling readers.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews various definitions of fluency and aligns this work with comprehension studies. Further the chapter reviews research focused on interventions that augmented fluency for struggling readers. Published work suggests that an effective programmatic approach for such readers is newspaper reading. These key topics define the emphasis for this chapter.

The definitions for reading fluency vary; however, most definitions state that reading fluency is the ability to read accurately, quickly, effortlessly, and with appropriate expression and meaning (Rasinski, 2003). The Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement (IDEA) defines fluency is in terms of automaticity as a quick and accurate level of recognition that occurs with little conscious attention, such as the ability to quickly and accurately associate sounds with letters in order to read words (p. 19). The National Reading Panel (Panel, 2000a) also examined oral reading fluency as a component of literacy. The panel concluded that, "Fluent readers can read text with speed, accuracy, and proper expression, and fluency depends upon well developed word recognition

skills" (Panel, 2000a). "The report also stated in referring to word recognition skills that these skills do not inevitably lead to fluency" (p. 3-1). The panel identified other factors that lead to fluency, such as: quality of reading instruction, guided reading or repeated reading, practice, or the amount of time spent reading, and instructional interventions (pp. 3.5-3.21). Fuchs et al. (2001) define oral reading fluency as, "the oral translation of text with speed and accuracy" and theorize that oral reading fluency may assist as an indicator of overall reading competence (p. 239).

Fluent reading is an important skill for all readers to develop. Reading fluency is important because it affects students' reading efficiency and comprehension. However, struggling readers often struggle to read fluently, leading to difficulties in reading comprehension (Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1998).

First and foremost, one should ask the question: *What is a struggling reader?* According to Carlisle (2004), she defines the struggling readers as: Children who find it hard to grasp the relation of the spoken and written language, children who lag behind their peers in development of standard American English, and children

with limited preschool experiences with written texts and rich exposure to language in the home.

It is important to take into consideration the diversity of the students we identify as "struggling readers." Lyons (2003) states that when it comes to eliminating the *struggle* out of the struggling readers, we need to undertake another look at the value of direct intervention--we can no longer sit back and wait.

Struggling readers will not inevitably prevail over the difficulties they are having in reading. In addition, their problems stem from a huge number of issues (p. 36). For example, they have troubles decoding text. Plus, struggling readers have difficulties with fluency and comprehension. They also have problems with vocabulary words. Their background (e.g., home, language, academic) can be a determining factor in their educational difficulties. The lack of prior knowledge (subject and concept) can cause difficulties as well. Struggling readings also lack self-monitoring skills and motivation.

In addition, there are specific factors that create the *struggle* for students and the teachers who teach them. Lyons (2003) states that quality reading instruction, differentiated instruction, ongoing assessment, and expert teachers are some of the fundamental ways to decrease

and/or get rid of the *struggle* factor. Additionally, explicit and methodical direct instruction in word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension is vital to students' progress and reading development.

Excellent readers understand what they read, largely because they have powerful prior knowledge that they can relate to a new text (Allington, 1995). They also use active strategies to search out the meaning of a text being read. It is inspiring that many reading educators see it as their goal to develop active readers who have rich prior knowledge, knowledge that they can learn to use to understand what they read (p. 49). On the other hand, others feel that developing active readers who use their wide-ranging prior knowledge and comprehension strategies to understand text a far-away goal. These nonbelievers consider that the primary goal should be teaching young children how to decode words. For that reason, the process of turning children into active readers should occur only after they have learned to sound out words.

Why should the reading growth of struggling readers be supported in the context of elementary school regular classroom reading programs? The first reason is that many students struggling in reading do not qualify for special education support services because of the differing

measures used in various school districts for student entry into these programs or the lack of sufficient funding in some school districts for support programs (Spear-Swerling & Sternberg, 1996).

Subsequently, even if struggling readers do receive reading support through special education programs, the greater part of their teacher-directed reading time still occurs in the regular classroom reading program (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989). Third, most remedial and special education support programs have not proven to be effective in accelerating the reading growth including fluency of struggling readers (Duffy-Hester, 1999). To sum up, struggling readers need more than effective short-term interventions; they also need effective reading instruction in their regular classroom programs (Hiebert, 1994b).

Although the need exists for elementary school classroom teachers to support the growth of struggling readers, a recent national survey of elementary school teachers revealed that many were unsure of how to meet the needs of readers who struggle (Duffy-Hester, 1999). Many students with reading problems require additional skills and strategies to enhance their reading fluency and comprehension.

Research has also demonstrated that fluency instruction can be an effective means of enhancing students' understanding of text (Rasinski, 2003). Fluent readers have developed the ability to see phrases as chunks of text, and to skillfully use these chunks to read and write more quickly. Samuels (1979) developed a theory of automatic information processing wherein the attainment of skilled, fluent decoding allows the reader to direct cognitive resources to comprehension, which is the ultimate goal of any reading activity. One means of fostering reading fluency is to engage students in activities explicitly designed to focus students' efforts on reading text accurately yet quickly. Partner reading, choral reading, echo readings and repetitive readings are effective strategies to meet these needs.

For struggling readers, diversity in instruction is essential. One reason is that these children are not a homogenous population; they differ greatly in their needs and responses to reading instruction of various sorts. Some need and benefit from traditional phonics. Two of the six students in the study group needed phonics intervention. Some need and benefit from a different form of word-recognition instruction. Some will only learn to read words through instruction emphasizing sight words

(Pressley, Gaskins, & Fingeret, 2006). The six struggling readers in the study group needed extra instruction with word recognition/vocabulary knowledge and sight words above the second grade level.

What the Research Says on Fluency and Texts

The findings of the handful of studies that have been conducted on the effects of text on reading fluency indicate that a high degree of overlap between the vocabulary of practice and criterion texts characterizes effective treatments. Rashotte and Torgesen (1985) modified texts to create one set in which the overlap of vocabulary across stories was low and a second set where overlap was high. The condition with the highest percentage of shared words yielded the greatest gains in reading speed but not on accuracy or comprehension.

Torgesen (2003) reviews various studies focused on fluency discusses the following studies. The first study he discusses is when LaBerge and Samuels (1974) made a fundamental discovery. Being able to sound out a word does not guarantee that the word will be understood as the child reads. When children are first learning to sound out words, it requires real mental effort. The more effort required the less consciousness left over for other

cognitive operations, including comprehension of the words being sounded out. Thus, LaBerge and Samuels' analyses made clear that it was critical for children to develop fluency in word recognition. Fluent word recognition consumes little cognitive capacity, freeing up the child's cognitive capacity for understanding what is read. Anyone who has ever taught elementary children and witnessed round-robin reading can recall students who could sound out a story with great effort but at the end had no idea of what had been read.

Many elementary teachers have seen students read an entire passage fluently, but with little or no recollection of what they had just read. Teachers must ask themselves if children are uninterested in the text or are they not interpreting the text. The ultimate goal of reading, is, of course, making meaning of text. Reading relies on thinking, and it is the comprehension of text, which is most important. Clearly, one needs to be able to decode text in order to make meaning of it. For this reason, it is essential that children are reading books that they can read with fluency and with at least 95% understanding. Effective teachers support students by offering appropriate word analysis and comprehension

strategies so that students can progress to increasingly challenging material.

In Faulkner and Levy's (1994) study, effects of word and conceptual overlap within grade-level texts were examined with good and poor readers. Students read pairs of text in four conditions: (a) words and content identical (rereading), (b) few shared words but same content (paraphrasing), (c) many shared words but different story content (word overlap), and (d) few shared words and different story content (unrelated stories). Both good and poor readers exhibited the most transfer when words and content were shared (i.e. rereading). Poor readers, unlike good readers, also improved on speed and accuracy when texts had high levels of word overlap. Word overlap was helpful to poor readers even when the shared words appeared in stories with different content (Samuels & Farstrup, 2006). Faulkner and Levy (1994) argued that the findings for effects of word and conceptual overlap within grade-level texts explained results of early studies on repeated reading such as Dowhower's (1989). According to Faulkner and Levy, the gains that Dowhower reported in rate, accuracy, comprehension, and prosodic reading, regardless of training, reflected the 77% overlap between words in the practice and final texts read by

students. The findings suggest that when students have opportunities to read texts in which high-frequency words and words with common and consistent patterns account for large percentages of the unique words in text their fluency benefits.

Tan and Nicholson (1997) carried out a study that emphasized the importance of word-recognition instruction to the point of fluency. In their study, struggling primary-level readers were taught 10 new words, with instruction either emphasizing word recognition to the point of fluency (they practiced reading the individual words until they could recognize them automatically) or understanding of the words (instruction involving mostly student-teacher discussions about word meanings).

Following the instruction, the students read a passage containing the words and answered comprehension questions about it. The students who had learned to recognize the words to the point of automaticity answered more comprehension questions than did students who experienced instruction emphasizing individual word meanings.

Consistent with other analyses (Breznitz, 1997a), Tan and Nicholson's outcome made obvious that development of fluent word-recognition skills can make an important difference in students' understanding of what they read.

Speed in reading and accurate word reading is not the main goal for fluent readers. Fluency at the word level, as well as reading accurately and quickly, is necessary so that the reader can choose to slow down and employ comprehension strategies (Farstrup & Samuels, 2006). When word-level reading is fluent, enough cognitive capacity is available to permit the decision to implement the comprehension strategies and gain from these strategies (p. 141).

While the ability to read words accurately is a necessary skill in learning to read, the speed at which this is done becomes a critical factor in ensuring that children understand what they read (Lyon, 1997). Although the initial stages of reading for many students require the sequential learning of phoneme awareness and phonics principles, substantial practice and continual application of those skills, fluency and automaticity in decoding and word recognition must be acquired as well (Lyon, 1997).

Researchers interested in skilled reading have often relied on a particular approach to the study of reading. They have asked readers to think aloud as they work through a text. Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) reviewed all such studies of reading to generate a catalog of the processes used by skilled readers. Although skilled

reading is very active, it is also very coherent. One obvious consistency is that most reading occurs generally from the beginning to the end of the text. Pressley and Hilden (2001) stress this point when they write, "Namely, the reader begins with the first word of the reading and continues reading until the last word. Therefore, excellent readers do more than simply read every word of the text; they also develop meaning from a text before, during, and after their reading of it" (p. 15).

Classroom-based Fluency Practices: What Research Says

Implementing oral reading fluency into an effective reading curriculum is not the problem. Fluency practice comes by reading, and gradually develops over time and through considerable practice (Panel 2000b). When children read and reread passages their fluency will increase.

According to Sullivan and Allen-Thompson (1998) the newspaper is an excellent resource for fluency practice. Fluency building is best taught through modeled reading, listening, strong decoding skill lessons, and phrase reading exercises. These skills cannot be taught in an isolated manner through a workbook. They are, however, taught effectively through newspaper articles. The teacher can choose an appropriate article, focus on vocabulary and

decoding and then model the phrase-reading and fluency component while students listen.

Fluency is important because it provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Since fluent readers do not have to concentrate on decoding the words, they can focus their attention on what the text means. As mentioned previously, The National Reading Panel (2000) defines reading fluency as reading with "speed, accuracy, and proper expression." There are two primary ways in which fluency plays a part in learners' reading development (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). The first involves the development of automatic word recognition, while the second deals with prosody, or those elements of fluency that allow oral reading to sound like spoken language.

The First Key Factor to Fluency--Automatic Word Recognition

The sheer volume of words that children are expected to read quickly and accurately is daunting. According to Snow (1999) children will be expected to recognize and know well over 80,000 different words by the end of third grade. This means that they must be able to recognize these words and know their meanings. While the emphasis is squarely on developing word recognition skill in the very early grades, we must also prepare children for the

avalanche of concepts and information they will be expected to understand. Research indicates that early school development of vocabulary and world knowledge is especially critical for children who come from impoverished homes (Snow, 1999).

Word recognition must become something children can do on their own, because they will quickly be expected to read words they have never before seen in print. Only a few thousand words usually receive direct instruction in the primary grades. Research has proven that children who read the newspaper on a daily basis are exposed to more high frequency words more than children who only read basal texts on a daily basis (Sullivan & Allen-Thompson, 1998).

Research has found that newspaper reading can be an effective tool to build vocabulary, reading comprehension skills and to improve fluency (DeRoche, 2001). Through repeated use of cut out newspaper headlines and sentences, students can begin to use context clues to determine meaning. They can also cut out new words, old words with new meanings, or words that they now feel more comfortable using in their own writing. As with phonemic awareness and phonics instruction, vocabulary development requires a manipulative element in the beginning stages. Eventually

students can use the newspapers to develop their own content-based analogies, but in the beginning they need to highlight, cut, paste, draw and put words in a simple sentence. Vocabulary development is no longer just for reading. It has now been expanded to include a listening, a speaking and a writing stance. With newspaper activities a teacher can choose an appropriate article, focus on vocabulary and decoding and then model the phrase reading and fluency component while students listen. As the teacher scaffolds student learning, the student's can choose their own articles that interest them. Parkay and Hass (2000) contend that the most favorable conditions for learning involve personal interest and purpose. In these conditions, the learner faces the learning situation because he has an interest in it. They further explain that the learner becomes more wholeheartedly involved in the learning because of his interest and concern. Therefore, if children are allowed to select their favorite section of the newspaper they will be more engaged and interested in their own learning.

The Second Key Factor to Fluency--Contribution of Prosody

While automatic word recognition ensures that fluent readers can accurately and effortlessly decode text, it does

not account for their ability to make oral reading sound like spoken language (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000). There is an implicit understanding that fluency involves reading with expression or prosody. In other words, fluent reading incorporates prosodic features such as pitch, stress, and appropriate phrasing (Kuhn, 2004). Kuhn also emphasizes the importance of the ways in which prosody relates to comprehension.

Learners who have not achieved fluency read either in a word-by-word manner or by grouping words in ways that do not parallel spoken language (Carlisle, 2004). Readers are able to employ prosody correctly only as they become aware of the connection between written and oral language. On the other hand, the correct use of prosody serves as an indicator of a reader's understanding of the material because without such an understanding it would be impossible to apply these elements appropriately.

Kuhn (2004) stresses the fact that in order for a reader to develop prosody one must listen to and read along with a skilled person who reads expressively. She states this important fact when she says, "It is important to note that this ability develops as learners listen to and read along with skilled models of expressive reading" (p. 345). Given this understanding of the role

automaticity and prosody play in the ability to construct meaning from text, it seems likely that instruction designed to develop learners' fluency will lead to improvements in their comprehension as well. For the reason that the newspaper offers students many opportunities to decode unfamiliar words, recognize frequently used words, and practice prosody, it was the logical choice of authentic text for this research.

The Third Key Factor to Fluency--Automaticity

Automaticity training is probably the reading skill least addressed in the classroom. With this skill students' oral reading sounds almost as if they were speaking. They rapidly group words for better comprehension and read quickly, accurately, and with expression. On the other hand, without automaticity training students tend to read slowly, inaccurately, and usually word by word. Their reading is often choppy, and plodding with an emphasis on completion instead of comprehension (Bender & Larkin, 2003).

To address the need for automaticity instruction, the newspaper is a vital tool to incorporate various types of reading: skimming, scanning, and reading words in phrases. It also provides the students with individual activities for timed readings, re-readings, and taped readings.

The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) offers a few 'best practices' from evidence-based research on automaticity instruction. NIFL states that repeated and monitored oral reading improves fluency and overall reading achievement. Another important fact is that students who read and reread passages out loud as they receive guidance and feedback become better readers. Lastly, researchers have found practicing oral reading through the use of audiotapes, tutors, peer guidance or other means can be effective techniques to improve oral reading fluency.

Does Newspaper Reading Fit Into A Reading Program Effectively?

Reading fluency is best achieved when a host of variables deemed central to effective reading are also being practiced. Thus a solid curricular program will include instruction in decoding, vocabulary development, and comprehension, so that specific fluency interventions are being made in the context of a favorable curricular context.

Research has shown that fluency building is best taught through modeled readings, listening, strong decoding skill lessons, and phrase reading exercises. These skills cannot be taught in an isolated manner

through a workbook. They are, however, taught effectively through a curriculum related newspaper article. The teacher can choose an appropriate article, focus on vocabulary and decoding and then model the phrase reading and fluency component while students listen.

Vocabulary development is another crucial research-based reading skill. Without knowledge of word meanings the student is greatly hampered in understanding any material. To date the most effective ways of developing an enriched vocabulary are through use of the dictionary, knowledge of word parts, and getting meaning from words in context. These methods are still effective today but there is also a focus on choice of words to learn, working the word through looking at many different components of the word, not just the definition, and visualization and vocalization (Dudley & Marling, 2004).

Newspaper usage is vital to vocabulary development. The words found in the newspaper are the commonly used words of the day. These words are content related and their meanings can usually be determined through context due to the structure of a newspaper article. Through repeated use of cut out newspaper headlines and sentences, students can begin to use context clues to determine meaning. They can also cut out new words, old words with

new meanings, or words that they now feel more comfortable using in their own writing. As with phonemic awareness and phonics instruction, vocabulary development requires a manipulative element in the beginning stages (Shaw, 2000). Eventually students can use the newspapers to develop their own content-based analogies, but in the beginning they need to highlight, cut, paste, draw and put words in a simple sentence.

The Significance of Reading Comprehension Skills to Increase Fluency

Flood & Lapp (2000) present a review of research that describes what competent readers do to understand text and what is known about teaching strategies for at-risk students. They discuss their views on comprehension when they state that, "Comprehension is viewed as the construction of meaning and that competent readers are strategic readers" (p. 138). Shaw (2000) believes in order for students to become more competent readers, students need to mentally organize the information that they read and take notes on this information. She further states, "Text comprehension instruction can be linked to practically any newspaper article" (p. 3). Every activity that was implemented for this study text comprehension was embedded.

Flood and Lapp (2000) ask some daunting questions such as: "Are at-risk students at risk because they have not been taught or because they haven't practiced reading?" (p. 139). Nonetheless, Flood and Lapp suggest "that it is the reader who must construct meaning, not the teacher or the text" (p. 140).

Good readers are purposeful and active. They have strategies from which to work and know how to reflect on various types of readings. These readers are able to utilize all their senses when they read. They are also able to utilize the talents of other people in cooperative learning situations (Pressley, 2001). For working cooperatively, many of the newspaper exercises can be adapted to pairs or group work.

Readers do not come by the above-mentioned skills easily. They develop these skills through materials (Allington, 2001). Newspaper reading gives the opportunity to build students' text comprehension skills in a meaningful way. This study proves that when students are encouraged to use the newspaper and other real life materials with continued and structured practice, students will benefit greatly. They will become the independent, resourceful, and critical readers of the 21st century (Shaw, 2000).

Current research supports that integrating the newspaper is one of the most comprehensive resources to helping students become readers. Many states have implemented the Newspaper in Education (NIE) program which meets the state content standards. California's program is called the California Newspaper in Education (CNIE) which is part of a national system of cooperation between school districts and local newspapers. More than 700 newspapers across the United States and Canada participate in the NIE program throughout the academic year. Students at all grade levels use the newspaper as a vital part of their daily studies.

Furthermore, Newspaper in Education (NIE) is an international program begun in 1955 to advance the use of newspapers in schools. The main purpose of the program is to improve reading, spelling and writing abilities. The newspaper that was used during this study was the Press-Enterprise. The Press-Enterprise has had an NIE Program for more than 20 years. The newspaper is delivered to nearly 50,000 students each year in more than 35 Inland Southern California school districts. During the school year they will provide over 1.3 million newspapers directly into students' hands (CNIE).

NIE programs have several areas of concentration. In one, students learn about the newspaper - how it is put together, what makes news, how to read the newspaper critically, how to separate fact from opinion and the crucial role that a free press plays in our nation's well-being.

Another dimension of NIE has students learn with newspapers. Newspapers become key resources for teaching concepts and skills in all subject areas and at all grade levels.

Motivation: A Key to Learning

In general, individuals do not learn unless they experience some urge or motivation to do so. Youngsters, in particular, do best with materials that matter to them, that are relevant to their everyday lives. Science and math, for example, become more alive when students can approach these disciplines by reading reports about snow storms and space flights and football games. Newspapers, then, are "real-life referents" for teaching what otherwise might be abstract concepts.

Newspapers are fresh, up-to-date and practical. They help bridge the gap between the textbook and the real world. Newspaper reading can make learning fun and

relevant. An additional benefit is that newspaper reading helps the students become more active, engaged and informed learners. Tompkins (2003) explains the importance of an engaging and diversified curriculum. She suggests the use of literature response journals, reader's theater, book clubs, Venn diagrams, online discussion groups, and interviews with student's assuming the role of a character or author students will become active learners. All of the above strategies can be effectively embedded into a curriculum using newspaper reading. Tompkins further states that selecting books or materials that are of interest to students is also important and allowing students to choose their own text for reading.

Research suggests that the use of newspapers in the classroom results in an increase in students' reading interest, reading attitudes, reading achievement, writing performance, comprehension, classroom verbal interactions, and an increase of reading in adulthood (Palmer, 1994).

To further address the motivation issue, students can participate in newspaper activities that require a cooperative experience such as choral reading, paired reading or reader's theater readings (DeRoche, 2001). Also, poetry writing can be implemented to build vocabulary and to use words in a different way with a

newspaper. An additional and effective strategy that teachers can implement using the newspaper is including a daily read aloud.

Ivey (2002) discusses the benefits of reading aloud to students for enhancing fluency, and keep students motivated. She states the importance of teacher read-alouds when she says, "A second principle of effective content area literacy is to read aloud to students. Here the teacher not only models reading aloud, but can display meta-cognitive strategies through thinking aloud" (p. 59). O'Donnell, McLaughlin, and Weber (2003) state the importance of a read aloud when they offer this advice, "One procedure for enhancing fluency is for teachers to model fluent reading by reading aloud to students" (p. 205). They further state that this listening preview provides an opportunity for the learner to listen to a selection or a passage prior to instruction. Previewing increases the time a student interacts with the reading material and exposes students to the vocabulary, phrasing, and context before reading the text themselves (p. 233). The students can develop knowledge about the text or monitor what they already know about the topic before they begin to read the text themselves.

Copland and Knapp (2006) found that when teachers and learners bring prior knowledge, cultural backgrounds, and beliefs about schooling and each other that these elements provide an important reference point for meaning and relevance in instruction, and will increase students' motivation for learning. They observed a classroom where the students brought a mix of cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds that were different from the white middle-class experience of most teachers at the school. They found that the backgrounds of the participants in the classroom supplied a significant bearing to the subject matter and importance in instruction, and the mixture of these elements helped keep these students engaged and motivated to learn.

Why Use Newspapers in the Classroom?

Research shows that students who use newspapers in the classroom perform 10-29% better in reading comprehension, vocabulary development and critical thinking as measured on standardized tests, than students who do not use newspapers in the classroom (Measuring Success, 2003). Research also suggests that the use of newspapers in the classroom results in an increase in students' reading interest, reading attitudes, reading

achievement, writing performance, comprehension, classroom verbal interactions, and an increase of reading in adulthood (DeRoche, 1981; Palmer, 1994).

Current research supports that integrating the newspaper is one of the most comprehensive resources to helping students become readers. The newspaper is a great resource for modeling expository text.

In the educational literature of the 1970s and '80s, research reports show that newspaper use in school increases student awareness about the world at large and the immediate community. Another advantage is that the newspaper has a positive effect on student attitudes toward school, community and subject matter. In addition, students who used newspapers as a principal source material had better achievement scores in social studies, language arts and mathematics than their matched counterparts, who relied only on textbooks.

In one study, reading skills increased by two grade levels for students who used newspapers as compared to those who used traditional methods. In another study, reading scores were consistently higher for 12- to 18-year-olds who used newspapers or a combination of newspapers and textbooks; in some cases, scores differed

by as much as four grade levels after using newspapers in class (CNIE).

Research has also proven when the newspaper is used in class verbal interactions; student motivation and even student behavior appear to improve. Additionally, newspaper use in class tends to promote increased newspaper use at home.

Research has proven that using the newspaper can increase reading, writing, spelling and has proven to be a major benefactor for increase fluency scores. DeRoche (2001) stresses this vital point when he says, "There is substantial evidence that using newspapers in schools contributes to students' reading skills, writing skills, and current event knowledge. The effects are most dramatic among minorities" (p. 10). Literacy experts believe that adults with low level literacy skills lack a sufficient foundation of basic skills to function successfully in our society. By providing schools with newspapers, sponsors can help prevent illiteracy at time when young people have a support system of educators in place. Newspapers open the world to them and give them a chance to succeed.

Teachers utilize the newspapers as textbooks and supplements in areas such as reading, writing, math, science, history, language arts, special education,

English as a second language and more. Any classroom subject and grade level from kindergarten to adult education can incorporate the newspaper into their curriculum.

Newspapers are considered the most up-to-date, inexpensive textbook available to students. The skills acquired from regular newspaper exposure make each student a better learner, a better problem-solver, and a better leader (CNIE, 2007).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher chooses to implement newspaper reading for six struggling third grade students for many particular reasons. Using newspaper within the reading curriculum makes learning fun and relevant. Newspaper reading also meets students' needs at all levels and facilitates critical thinking. Newspaper reading increases student's ability to organize information, increases students' research skills, and enhances student abilities in reading, writing, and verbal communication. Using the newspaper facilitates life-long reading habits, facilitates the transfer of skills and knowledge to other disciplines, and increases student awareness of the local and global community. Reading the newspaper also helps the students become more active,

engaged and informed citizens, but first and foremost it is a vital tool to improve fluency for all students.

Various research-based articles focused on the importance of increasing fluency for struggling readers were discussed in this chapter. Published work suggests that an effective reading curriculum for such readers is newspaper reading. The key topics emphasized for this chapter were fluency is word-recognition skills, prosody and automaticity. Research suggests that an effective reading program for struggling readers to approve fluency encompasses decoding, vocabulary, and reading comprehension skills. The three primary components of fluency described in this chapter were accuracy in decoding, automaticity in word recognition, and the appropriate use of prosodic features including stress, pitch, and juncture.

The following chapter details the methodology that was implemented during this study. The various activities and exercises implemented can be found in most NIE programs.

The NIE program includes a variety of engaging and effective strategies that can be implemented into an effective classroom reading program. Thus, the newspaper, rich in opportunities to decode unfamiliar words,

recognize frequently used words, and practice prosody, was a logical choice of authentic text for this research which will be discussed and outlined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In previous chapters, the issues related to increasing fluency for struggling readers were discussed. As the research has indicated, it is vital for students to become fluent readers. When word-level reading is fluent, readers can execute the comprehension strategies and profit from them (Pressley, Gaskins, & Fingeret (2006). Thus, fluent readers are more likely to think hard about what they are reading.

This study was conducted to examine the effects of implementing the newspaper to increase fluency for six struggling third grade readers. The need for this data has high significance in light of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), and the ever-increasing pressure for all students to pass competency based tests.

Research has demonstrated that students who participate in literary programs that incorporate the newspaper as authentic text outperform students who do not use the newspaper (DeRoche, 2001). However, few studies have offered data that shows a correlation between systematic reading instruction using the newspaper, and students' progress in decoding, fluency, vocabulary and

comprehension. The researcher was interested in finding engaging and effective strategies that would motivate these six struggling readers. In describing one successful teacher, Copland and Knapp (2006) state that she provided choices within the context of curriculum for her students which allowed them to incorporate their own strengths and interests in a given topic of learning. This type of teaching strategy can, in itself, promote motivation in students because they are involved in choosing their own path of learning. The teacher in Copland and Knapp's text used approaches that allowed for cooperative learning and peer interaction.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the advantages of using this readily available, low-cost, high-interest authentic text to improve the reading fluency in struggling third grade readers. The targeted group was six third grade students that have been struggling readers since kindergarten. This four-week study focused on explicitly targeting improving fluency using the newspaper using qualitative and quantitative data. In addition, particular strategies were employed to effectively increase the fluency for six struggling readers.

Measures

The Multidimensional Fluency Scale (MFS) (see Appendix C) was used as a pre-, during, and post-assessment tool to rate reading fluency for the six students in the study. This assessment instrument took into consideration the elements of prosody pertinent to fluent oral reading ability. The MFS was used to analyze quantitative measures of progress for the six students before, during and after the study. The MFS was administered as each child read a grade level passage for one minute. During the timed reading, the teacher would check for accuracy and prosody. After the reading was completed the teacher recorded the words read per minute on each child's score sheet.

In addition, at the onset of the study each student was administered a DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) which is a criterion-based performance assessment (see Table 1). This instrument allows teachers to gather information about students' reading interest, use of strategies, comprehension, fluency rate, and attitudes (Clay, 1991). The DRA can: (a) determine a reader's independent assessment reading level, (b) facilitate the effective grouping of students for reading experiences and instruction, (c) provide immediate information for

instructional decision making; confirms or redirects ongoing instruction, and (d) document changes over time in reading performance (p. 1). A DRA conference was conducted with each child. Students read aloud a grade appropriate book, selected by the teacher. As the student read, the teacher took a running record, recording accuracy, and miscues. After completing the story, the student began a free retell of the story, with the teacher probing or prompting for any missing information. After the session, the teacher completed a comprehension rubric based on the recorded answers (Weaver, 2002). The DRA was used during this study because it provides specific information about a student's decoding, comprehension skills, fluency and attitude towards reading. In addition, this measurement tool provided the teacher with a pretest and a posttest, and because it would coordinate with the classroom teacher's pre-established running record program.

A student's DRA results needed to demonstrate a below-grade level fluency score and their inability to comprehend what they had read to be eligible for the study. Each of the six students tested had significant word recognition errors that identified the third-grade reading sample was at their frustration level. Additionally, their comprehension errors identified that

the third grade reading sample was also at their frustrational level.

Prètest data collection procedures occurred in January before implementation of the study. As mentioned above, an MFS and a DRA were administered during the study after week two. Posttest data were collected in the end of February, at the conclusion of the research. The third grade teacher administered all of the assessments.

Participants

This study was conducted in one-third-grade classroom from a 520-student elementary school in Riverside County, California. The study took place over a 4-week period. The third-grade students in the study came from a middle-class neighborhood. One of these children is receiving support services in reading comprehension. Parent permission was obtained for all participants.

The study group consisted of four males and two females. Two of the six in the study group were Hispanic, and the remaining four students were Caucasian.

Table 1. Pre-assessment Scores

STUDENT	ACCURACY	FLUENCY:WPM MFS results	PHRASING (prosody)	RETELLING (comprehension)
1	2.3	82	2.2	2.8
2	2.4	73	2.1	2.5
3	2.2	61	1.7	2.5
4	2.0	81	2.1	2.7
5	1.9	73	1.8	2.4
6	2.2	74	2.2	2.6

The above table presents the pre-assessment MFS and the DRA results which include: Miscue errors, comprehension errors, phrasing and fluency scores. Students receive a score on four skills:

- (1) Accuracy--percentage of words read correctly
- (2) Fluency Rate: Words per minute (WPM)--This score is the number of words read per minute.
- (3) Phrasing--expression, intonation, guided by punctuation and meaning.

Scoring Rubric:

Score of 1: Beginning level on this skill.

Score of 2: Developing level on this skill.

Score of 3" Proficient use of this skill.

Score of 4: Advanced use of this skill.

Teacher

One third grade teacher volunteered to participate in this study. The teacher was female, and was participating in a graduate program. The teacher had four years of teaching experience, and all four years she taught third grade.

Procedures

Reading fluency builds over time through modeling and instruction, and guided and independent practice in a assortment of texts, (Worthy & Broaddus, 2002) the pull-out fluency instruction in this study followed a progression through the four phases of learning outline by Routman's Optimal Learning Model (20003). The Optimal Learning Model Across the Curriculum scaffolds instruction by allowing the students' to begin with guided practice and end their lessons with independent practice. (See Appendix A). Each new skill begins with the teacher modeling and guiding students in their own learning, and ends with an independent practice activity.

Instruction began in the Demonstration phase and proceeded, over a period of twenty days using the model twice, through the phases of shared demonstration, guided practice, and independent practice. By adhering to this

model, the responsibility for learning was gradually transitioned from the teacher to the students. Participants met with the teacher 45 minutes a day for twenty days. Each day's instruction included a warm-up activity, one or more instructional activities, and a closure activity. These activities addressed: decoding skills, vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension strategies. A central aspect of this instructional time was the work students completed with the newspaper students were asked to complete a minimum of 15 minutes of newspaper reading, which was recorded on a reading log, eight of the ten days for homework.

General Implementation Procedures

During the *Demonstration* phase, learning was initiated by the teacher, who modeled fluent reading, allowing the students to experience what good readers do during day 1 and day 2.

As the teacher read an article about the weather to her study the six participants listen enthusiastically. The read aloud was chosen as the opening activity because "it is an essential component of a balanced reading program in the primary grades, and the groundwork upon which all other elements of a reading/writing workshop are

built, including shared reading, silent reading, one-on-one reading with the teacher, guided reading, paired reading, literature circles, author studies, response journals, and book sharing" (Tompkins, 2003). In addition, "reading aloud exposes and supports students in reading and engaging with texts that they may not be able to handle independently," (Worthy & Broadus, 2002) the read aloud experience was an important introduction to the newspaper article selected by the students, which was written above the reading level of the students in the study group. To foster learning both during and after the read aloud, the teacher explained the metacognitive experience while the students listened, observed, and participated on a very limited basis.

After reading for 10 minutes she introduced the students to the structure of the newspaper. After each student listened and observed the teacher gave each of the six participants an activity, Newspaper Story Nomination (see Appendix B), which they completed in a small group setting as she demonstrated this exercise. This activity was necessary to introduce the students to the page numbering system (lettered sections, numbered pages), folds, types of news (hard news, opinion, and feature stories), index and language of the newspaper. The teacher

facilitated each step as the participants followed along. The first step for practice was to have students read an article from the front page of the newspaper. They all choral read this together. After they finished reading the teacher asked each student a comprehension question pertaining to the article. The teacher allowed the participants to ask a buddy for help. After that, they buddy read the same article. Then the teacher instructed the students to choose from the front-page section their favorite story. Each student completed the Nomination Form to nominate their favorite story to be used for upcoming lessons. Together they tallied the nomination forms. After the lesson, each student completed the Story Nomination activity, reassembled the newspaper, and return to their desk.

During the second day of the Demonstration Phase, the teacher read aloud an article from the newspaper for 10 minutes as the six participants listened. When she was finished reading she introduced the students to the 300 most frequently used words in the English language and supplied them with a reference table of these words. Each student was instructed to label their worksheets (see appendix B) with the letter of the alphabet on which they were to focus (day 2: A & B). Each student then searched

in a specific section of the newspaper (student's choice) for the frequently used words that began with the selected letter and they recorded where the words were found a provided sheet. Then they each wrote a sentence using the frequently used words, for the letter specified that they found in the newspaper. When they were finished the teacher allowed time for the students to share their findings and read their sentences to each other. This exercise using the high frequency words was implemented each day during the duration of the study.

The teacher assisted, choral, and tape-assisted reading activities included in the *Shared Demonstration* phase of instruction assisted the individual and collective needs of the six students in the study group. Following an initial running record using the newspaper article selected by the students as text, the teacher developed three scaffolded activities that would be beneficial to all six students: one to develop automaticity with sight word vocabulary, one to develop decoding skills for content vocabulary, and one designed to teach the students to group words into chunks when reading. The third activity, although not directly linked to either decoding or automaticity, was included since many struggling readers do not automatically chunk

sentences together. Tompkins (2003) states this point when she says, "fluent readers seem to understand how to chunk parts of sentences into meaningful units...but many struggling readers do not have this ability" (p. 250). Furthermore, the third activity was a natural extension of the first two, and a necessary skill for the Guided Practice.

The Shared Demonstration phase lasted eight days. Each student completed the frequent word warm-up each day which was discussed in the previous paragraph. On day 3 and day 13 the teacher administered a running record on each participant. Each student read for one minute as the teacher marked miscues, and then she counted the words that each child read. The teacher recorded the results for each student.

The following table shows the daily schedule using Routman's Optimal Learning Model (see Table 2).

Table 2. Daily Schedule

Day 1 Introduction to the newspaper	Day 2 Demonstration Phase	Days 3 to 10 Shared Phase	Days 11 to 16 Guided Practice Phase	Days 17 to 20 Independent Practice Phase
Warm-up: 10 minutes to free-read newspaper	Warm-Up: Read newspaper reader's checklist	Warm-Up: Frequent C-N words	Warm-Up: Frequent O-W words	Warm-Up: Frequent XYZ words
A. Language B. Page C. Numbering D. Folds E. Parts & Index	A. Teacher read aloud B. Introduction to high-frequency words	A. Running Records B. Teacher-Student assisted reading C. Story word worm activity D. Word wall activities E. Ways to phrase activity F. Comics captions activity	A. Partner reading B. Newspaper circles C. Newspaper based readers theater D. Readers theater script reading	A. Running records using article B. Readers theater performance
Practice: Story Nomination	Practice: Frequent A & B word sentences			
Closure: Reassemble newspapers	Closure: Share sentences	Closure:	Closure: Readers theater rating; high-frequency phrase	Closure: Share newspaper reading log highlights
Homework: Newspaper reading log	Homework: Newspaper reading log	Homework: Newspaper reading log	Homework: Newspaper reading log	Newspaper reading log

During the Shared Demonstration phase a variety of activities were conducted. On days 3 and 4 the Newspaper Story Word Worm was implemented. For this exercise each student used the 300 most frequently used word list and searched for words within a selected newspaper article. The teacher instructed the students to copy each word they

found onto the matching letter-space of the worm (see Appendix B). After they were finished with their Newspaper Story Word Worms the group choral read an article that they chose from the newspaper. A word wall was created on days 5 & 6 using the students' words from their Newspaper Story Word Worms. Each student cut and glued their words in alphabetical order onto construction paper and they hung their lists on the wall. The teacher read each word on the wall, and then the group echo read the words.

To increase fluency these struggling readers worked on phrasing by cutting out words, putting them into sentences and reading these sentences several times to a buddy on days 7 and 8. Another activity the students completed was the Comics Captions Activity on days 9 and 10. This activity targeted word recognition skills as they re-wrote comic captions and dialogue using only high frequency words. The teacher allowed time for the group to share with the entire class when they were finished creating their comics.

The third phase is the Guided Practice. These activities required the teacher to assist the students on a limited basis. This phase was implemented during the third week of the study. The six participants conducted a newspaper circle, partner read articles, and they began to

create their own readers' theater script using the newspaper. To create a script one student read an article and the others took notes. Then they all added important details.

The learning became much more student-initiated during the Guided Practice portion of the study. Students had many opportunities to reread text and to practice fluency by engaging in the partner reading, newspaper circle, and readers theater activities conducted in this phase. They also had sufficient opportunities to learn and develop prosody--"a series of features including pitch or intonation, stress or emphasis, and tempo or rate and the rhythmic patterns of language, all of which contribute to an expressive rendering of a text" (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000).

The six students practiced their readers' theater script during the Independent Phase; the final portion of the study which lasted for 3 days. On day 20 the six struggling readers performed their script in front of the entire class. The teacher administered a running record on each participant using a newspaper article.

During the Independent Practice phase of the study the teacher administered another running record. This post assessment gave students an opportunity to demonstrate their recent level of comprehension and oral reading

fluency ability. Additionally, new goals were established for future reading success with nominal support. To demonstrate their grasp of accurate, automatic, and prosodic reading skills the study group performed their readers' theater play for the whole class during this portion of the study.

The methodological approaches that were targeted in this study were suitable for these six third grade students who were struggling in reading. The Routman's Optimal Learning Model was implemented as a scaffolding tool. Students were guided from teacher modeling strategies to ending an activity by working independently. A variety of activities using the newspaper included strategies of building vocabulary skills, choral reading, shared reading, teacher read alouds, word recognition skills, tape-assisted readings and readers' theater. These strategies are all effective research-based skills to increase fluency. This study observed the outcomes of these strategies on this specific group of third grade students.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The researcher discovered that there were many ways in which her influences as an educator, affected the students' engagement in the fluency exercises. This chapter will examine the affects of the implementation of various activities to increase oral reading fluency for six struggling third grade readers.

This study analyzed data collected in a third grade classroom from a study of six students with a low fluency rate over a one month period. The data collected was a mixed design of consisting of both qualitative and quantitative data. A pre and post-assessment using the MFS (Multidimensional Fluency Scale (see Appendix C)) and the DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) of each child's reading abilities including a running record to record the fluency rate of each participant was administered in a one-on-one setting. The results of the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) was conducted and data was compiled for the six students in the study group (see table 3).

The DRA is a criterion-based, performance assessment which allows teachers to gather information about

students' reading interests, use of strategies, comprehension, and attitudes (Clay, 1991).

In interpreting the data of the pre-assessment, the researcher found the results to show that the six participants were below grade level in all four categories. The participants' retelling/comprehension scores were higher than their oral reading scores. The proficient level for fluency for students in the six month of third grade is 110 words per minute. The six participants' fluency rate was below the second grade proficiency level. These students were chosen based on their fluency rate results from the pre-assessment scores. To assess rate or automaticity the teacher had each student read a passage from the Houghton-Mifflin reading third grade reading series for one minute. Samuels (1979) states that timings of a student's reading or connected text allows a teacher to observe the number of words read correctly and the number of errors made in a given time period. Data from timed readers are usually recorded on a time chart. Timed readings (Samuels, 1979) can be used to measure and increase word-reading accuracy and passage-reading rate.

The phrasing (prosody) scores were well below grade level as well based on the pre-assessment DRA results. As

discussed in previous chapters prosody is "a series of features including pitch or intonation, stress or emphasis, and tempo or rate and the rhythmic patterns of language, all of which contribute to an expressive rendering of a text" (Kuhn & Stahl, 2000). Allington (1995) indicates that poor prosody can lead to confusion through inappropriate or meaningless grouping of words or through inappropriate applications of expression.

The study group is part of a middle-class school in Riverside County, California. The teacher in the study has taught for four years, all of those years she has taught third grade. The teacher in this study had previously seen research-based data that demonstrated that students who participated in literacy programs that incorporated the newspaper as authentic text outperformed students who did not use the newspaper. However, she had only seen few studies which had offered quantitative data that showed a correlation between systematic reading instruction using the newspaper, and student progress in decoding, fluency or comprehension.

The results indicate that the six students from this study group gained significantly in all four categories (accuracy, fluency rate, phrasing and comprehension) at

the conclusion of the study. Each student reached the proficient level in all four skills (see Table 3).

The results showed that five out of the six students progressed to the point that their prosody was very fluent and they were able to read with accuracy while comprehended the text. The one child who did not reach the grade-proficient level was receiving special services for reading.

Table 3. Developmental Reading Assessment and Multidimensional Fluency Scale Assessment Results

STUDENT	FLUENCY MFS results	FLUENCY MFS results	ACCURACY	ACCURACY	PHRASING prosody	PHRASING prosody	RETELLING	RETELLING
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1	82	112	2.3	3.3	2.2	3.3	2.8	3.4
2	73	103	2.4	3.4	2.1	3.1	2.5	3.5
3	61	97	2.2	3.2	1.7	3.0	2.5	3.3
4	81	108	2.0	3.6	2.1	3.0	2.7	3.2
5	73	82	1.9	2.5	1.8	2.7	2.4	3.4
6	74	114	2.2	3.4	2.2	3.0	2.6	3.3

The results proved that by engaging in the partner reading, newspaper circle, and readers theater activities conducted in this study, students had many opportunities

to reread text and to practice fluency. They also had ample opportunities to learn and develop prosody. Research suggests that students perform better when they are learning content which they truly care about, when learning stems from one's genuine interests and concerns (Parkay & Hass, 2000).

The six students appeared to look forward to their newspaper activities. The lowest reader enjoyed reading the several different sections of the newspaper. His enthusiasm is revealed when he exclaims, "I like to check up on the Angles, the weather, and see how things are getting better or worse in the world." (*Austin*). Samantha likes to read the opinions and comics. She thinks the coverage of the local public schools is good. "You can connect stuff from the newspaper to what we're doing in class. I like it better than using a textbook" (*Samantha*). Another student was aware of the media covered in print as well as on the television. John points this out when he says, "I can see the news in the newspaper before it's on TV." (*John*)

The results can also aid primary teachers to choose the most advantageous methods of increasing students' fluency, regardless of whether those individuals are reading below grade level.

The researcher observed the students talking, reading, and sharing the newspaper during their independent reading time in the classroom. The researcher also noted that the six struggling readers had the desire to interest others to read their 'new found text'. As the researcher completed the study, she found that implementing newspaper as text resulted in an increase of reading fluency amongst the struggling readers.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher's own classroom experience led her to a desire to research the topic of improving oral reading fluency in struggling readers. Based on previous benchmark scores, this researcher being a third grade teacher, wanted to find engaging and effective strategies to improve six struggling readers' fluency rates.

The researcher found that reading the newspaper was intrinsically motivating for students even at the third grade level. Copland and Knapp (2006) suggest that students will meet high learning standards when they have had effective instruction and appropriate support from their teachers. These outcomes support the findings of John Haefner (2004, ¶ 5), Professor Emeritus of Social Studies Education at the University of Iowa, who wrote the following:

Students, given the opportunity, come to see the newspaper as a bridge between the confining and often unreal world of school, and the vibrant, confusing and complex "real" world of which they are a part. Students will read a newspaper when they will not

read other school materials because the newspaper records events that have meaning for them.

The research reported here suggests that elementary education teachers can achieve success by modeling fluent reading for students through read alouds, having students practice read (or read repeatedly) certain passages, and supporting students while they read by reading with them (Rasinski, 2003). Worthy & Braddus, (2002) describe the added benefits of teacher read aloud. They stress the effectiveness of this strategy when they say, "The benefits of modeled reading include gains in rate, accuracy, phrasing, segmentation, and expression" (Worthy & Broadus, 2002).

The focus of this study was on improving the oral reading fluency of third grade students who struggle in reading. As such, the study was limited to instruction and activities that emphasized skills and strategies associated with fluency. Since, "prosody may also provide a link between fluency and comprehension" (Kuhn, 2004) this study leaves unanswered the possibility that given more time, significant outcomes for students would be attained with newspaper-based instruction. The study group met for only 45 minutes of instructional time-5 days a week, more extensive research on the effects of the

process used in this study seems warranted. Lyon (1997) explains that children vary in the amount of practice required to become fluent readers. He clarifies this important fact when he says, "Some youngsters can read a word only once to recognize it again with greater speed; others need 20 or more exposures. The average child needs between four and 14 exposures to automatize the recognition of a new word" (Lyon, 1997). Also, this study was implemented for one month; a longer duration could result in higher scores in each category.

Furthermore, as the study focused only on improving the fluency of students whose DRA results demonstrated low reading scores, it is unclear whether similar results could be achieved for students who performed at or above grade level in the four categories scored in this study. In addition, the study included only students in the third grade, additional research would be necessary to determine if such a program would be effective intervention for students at other grade levels.

Research has also noted that spelling instruction fosters the development of reading fluency. The study did not implement specific spelling instruction into this program. Further research, may find that by providing explicit spelling instruction, students fluency could

develop more rapidly. Lyon (1997) states that it is important to note that spelling instruction foster the development of reading fluency. He further discusses the importance of explicitly teaching spelling when he states, "Through spelling instruction, youngsters receive many examples of how letters represent the sounds of speech and also alert the young reader to the fact that written words are made up of large units of print" (Lyon, 1997).

Moreover, this study supports the premise that "when teachers make fluency a major classroom focus and when instruction and materials are engaging, students can accomplish the major goal of reading instruction independently for learning and enjoyment" (Worthy & Broaddus, 2002). In conclusion, it appears, from this study that oral reading fluency for students with significant reading problems, can improve using the Optimal Learning Model which scaffolds learning. Instruction in fluency should be embedded into reading activities every day. From the results, it is evident that struggling readers benefit from high-quality fluency instruction. Struggling readers improve their expression, as well as make improvements in rate and accuracy. Monitoring gains in all three aspects of fluency through regular assessment will help teachers plan effective

instruction using the newspaper as text for individual students.

APPENDIX A

OPTIMAL LEARNING MODEL ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

- ♦ Demonstration
- ♦ Shared demonstration
—*Gradual handover of responsibility*—
- ♦ Guided practice
- ♦ Independent practice

Optimal Learning Across the Curriculum

DEPENDENCE				INDEPENDENCE			
<i>To Learners</i>		<i>With Learners</i>		<i>By Learners</i>			
Demonstration		Shared Demonstration		Guided Practice		Independent Practice	
Teacher		Teacher		Student		Student	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiates models explains think aloud show how to "do it" 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstration leads negotiates suggests supports explains responds acknowledges 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> applies learning takes charge practices problem solves approximates self-corrects 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> initiates self-monitors self-directs applies learning problem solves confirms self-evaluates 	
Student		Student		Teacher		Teacher	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> listens observes may participate on a limited basis 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> listens interacts collaborates responds approximates participates as best he can 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> scaffolds validates teaches as necessary evaluates observes encourages clarifies 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> affirms assists as needed responds acknowledges evaluates sets goals 	
Instructional Context		Instructional Context		Instructional Context		Instructional Context	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reading and writing aloud shared read aloud direct explanation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shared reading and writing interactive reading shared read aloud 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> guided (silent) reading reciprocal teaching literature conversations partner reading guided writing experiences 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent reading and writing informal conferences partner reading homework and assignments 	

Handover of responsibility

Reading Essentials by Regie Routman (Heinemann: Portsmouth, NH) 2003

APPENDIX B
DAILY SCHEDULE

Daily Schedule

Day One

Warm-Up: 10 minutes to free-read newspaper

Procedure: 1. Introduction to the Newspaper
Aloud*

- A. language
- B. page numbering
- C. folds
- D. parts and index

2. Practice—Story Nomination*

Closure: reassemble newspapers

Homework: Newspaper Reading Log

Day Three & Four

Warm-Up: Frequent *CDE* word warm-up
warm-up

Procedure: 1. **Shared Demonstration:**
Running Records/
Teacher-Student
Assisted Reading*
2. Newspaper Story Word
Worm Activity*

Closure: **Shared Demonstration:** Choral Reading*

Homework: Newspaper Reading Log

Day Seven & Eight

Warm-Up: Frequent *IJK* word warm-up

Procedure: 1. **Shared Demonstration:**
Teacher-Student
Assisted Reading*
2. Ways to Phrase Activity*

Closure: share Newspaper Reading Log highlights

Day Eleven & Twelve

Warm-Up: Frequent *OPQ* word warm-up

Procedure: 1. **Guided Practice:** Partner
Reading of Article*
2. **Guided Practice:** Newspaper
Circles*§

Closure: share circle task with group members

Homework: Newspaper Reading Log

Day Fifteen & Sixteen

Warm-Up: Frequent *UVW* word warm-up

Procedure: 1. Reading with Expression—
stress, pitch, and juncture
2. **Guided Practice:** RT script
reading

Closure: RT Rating—High-Frequency Phrase

Homework: Newspaper Reading Log

Day Two

Warm-Up: read Newspaper Reader's Checklist

Procedure: 1. **Demonstration:** Read

2. Introduction to 300 High-
Frequency Words

3. Practice—Frequent *A* and *B*
word sentences

Closure: share sentences

Homework: Newspaper Reading Log

Day Five & Six

Warm-Up: Frequent *FGH* word

Procedure: 1. **Shared Demonstration:**
Teacher-Student
Assisted Reading*
2. Word Wall of Non-Frequent
words from Article*
3. Word Wall Word Play Maps

Closure: share posters

Homework: Newspaper Reading Log

Day Nine & Ten

Warm-Up: Frequent *LMN* word warm-up

Procedure: 1. **Shared Demonstration:**
Tape-Assisted Reading*
2. Comics Captions Activity*

Closure: share comic strip dialogue

Homework: Newspaper Reading Log

Day Thirteen & Fourteen

Warm-Up: Frequent *RST* word warm-up

Procedure: 1. **Guided Practice:** Partner
Reading of Article*
2. **Guided Practice:** Newspaper-
Based Readers Theater*§

Closure: RT Rating--High-Frequency Word

Homework: Newspaper Reading Log

Day Seventeen-Twenty

Warm-Up: Frequent *XYZ* word warm-up

Procedure: 1. **Independent Practice:** Running
Records using Article*
2. **Independent Practice:** Readers
Theater Performance

Closure: Share Newspaper Reading Log highlights

* newspaper story chosen by students was used in these activities

§ activities from *Featuring the Frameworks: Linking Language Arts to Your Newspaper*, A project of the Massachusetts
Newspaper in Education Council written by Dr. Darla Shaw

APPENDIX C
MULTIDIMENSIONAL FLUENCY SCALE

Use the following rubric (1-4) to rate reader fluency in the areas of expression and volume, phrasing, smoothness, and pace.

EXPRESSION AND VOLUME

1. *Reads words as if simply to get them out.* Little sense of trying to make text sound like natural language. Tends to read in a quiet voice.
2. *Begins to use voice to make text sound like natural language* in some areas of the text but not in others. Focus remains largely on pronouncing the word. Still reads in a quiet voice.
3. Make text sound like *natural language* throughout the better part of the passage. Occasionally slips into expressionless reading. Voice volume is generally appropriate throughout the text.
4. Reads with *good expression and enthusiasm throughout the text.* Varies expression and volume to match his or her interpretation of the passage.

PHRASING

1. Reads in a *monotone* with little sense of boundaries; frequently reads *word-by-word*.
2. Frequently reads in two- and three-word phrases, giving the impression of *choppy reading*; improper stress and intonation fail to mark ends of sentences and clauses.
3. Reads with a *mixture of run-ons*, mid-sentence pauses for breath, and some choppiness, reasonable stress and intonation.
4. Generally reads with *good phrasing*, mostly in clause and sentence units, with adequate attention to expression.

SMOOTHNESS

1. Makes frequent *extended pauses, hesitations, false starts, sound-outs*, repetitions, and/or multiple attempts.
2. Experiences *several "rough spots"* in text where extended pauses or hesitations are more frequent and disruptive.
3. *Occasionally breaks smooth rhythm* because of difficulties with specific words and/or structures.
4. *Generally reads smoothly* with some breaks, but resolves word and structure difficulties quickly, usually through self-correction.

PACE

1. Reads *slowly and laboriously*.
2. Reads *moderately slowly*.
3. Reads with an *uneven mixture of fast and slow pace*.
4. Consistently reads at *conversational pace*; appropriate rate throughout reading.

Scores range from 4-16. Generally, scores below 8 indicate that fluency may be a concern. Scores of 8 or above indicate that the student is making good progress in fluency.

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